DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 049 SP 033 796

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TITLE Preparation of Minority Educators (PREMIER): A Public School/Community College/University Collaborative Program.
PUB DATE 17 Feb 92
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (72nd, Orlando, FL, February 15-19, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Advising; *Academic Persistence; *College School Cooperation; Community Colleges; Elementary Secondary Education; Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Intercollegiate Cooperation; Learning Strategies; Mentors; *Minority Group Teachers; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Design; *Student Recruitment; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Shortage

ABSTRACT

PREMIER (Preparation of Minority Educators Partnership Program) is designed to find ways to attract and retain more minority teachers in Florida schools. It is a collaborative effort among an urban school district (Duval County Public Schools), a local community college (Florida Community College at Jacksonville), and an urban college of education (University of North Florida). PREMIER has five major goals: (1) to enhance cooperative links among the community college, the university, and the public schools in order to increase the number of minority students entering teacher preparation, improve students' chances of graduating from college, and facilitate the matriculation process from school to community college to university; (2) to identify and recruit more minority students from high schools and community colleges and provide mentoring experiences designed to support them through their undergraduate program; (3) to provide PREMIER students with academic support in basic skills needed for success in the teacher preparation program and in teaching; (4) to provide a wide range of early field experiences; and (5) to provide a counseling/mentoring support system to improve retention and program completion rates. (IAH)

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PREPARATION OF MINORITY EDUCATORS (PREMIER): A PUBLIC SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM

A paper presented at the 72 Annual Meeting of the
Association of Teacher Educators
February 17, 1992, Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT

Describes the PREMIER (Preparation of Minority Educators) Partnership Program, which collaboratively (public school/ community college/university) encourages, assists, and increases the numbers of minority students preparing for careers in teaching.

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PREPARATION OF MINORITY EDUCATORS (PREMIER): A PUBLIC SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges facing schools of the twenty-first century is how to address the incongruence between increasing minority student populations and diminishing numbers of minorities entering the teaching profession. As Kennedy (1989) points out:

> The student population is changing dramatically. In the near future, Hispanics will replace Blacks as the dominant minority in this country; the total minority population will become a substantial portion of the total population; and in some states, Caucasians will become a minority group. Yet, despite these changes in the student population, our teaching population is still largely White, suburban, middle class and female. (p. 9)

In an attempt to address this issue, the PREMIER (Preparation of Minority Educators) Partnership Program was developed. PREMIER collaboratively (public school/community college/university) encourages, assists, and increases the numbers of minority students preparing for careers in teaching.

BACKGROUND

A recent AACTE publication, Recruiting Minority Teachers (1989) reports that of the current 2.3 million public school teachers, minorities account for only 10.3% and projections indicate that by the 1990s minorities will constitute about 30% of the population, but only 5% of the K-12 teaching force. Coupled with a greater proportion (37%) of Black and Hispanic

teachers who have 20 or more years of experience than do White teachers (30%), the minority teaching force can be expected to shrink even more if serious attention is not given to minority recruitment and retention in teacher preparation programs.

This national trend is mirrored in Florida. Florida Department of Education policy analyst Martha Miller (1991), estimates that presently minority students represent about 24 percent of the students in Florida. By the year 2000, the percentage may increase to 40 percent. While the minority student population continues to increase, the supply of minority teachers is decreasing. As shown in Table 1, proportionally fewer minorities are entering and completing teacher education programs than are enrolled in Florida's public schools or teaching in its classrooms.

Table 1

Number of Graduates of Teacher Education Programs
By Racial-Ethnic Group
Compared to Public School Percentage

		Percentages		
Group	Teacher Education Graduates 1989-90	Teacher Education Graduates 1989-90	Public School Enrollment Fall 1990	Public School Classroom Teachers Fall 1990
White	3,660	84.8	61.9	80.2
Black	309	7.2	24.0	14.6
Hispanic	328	7.6	12.4	4.8
Asian	16	0.4	1.5	0.2
Native American	5	0.1	0.2	0.1
Total	4,318	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2 compares percentages for Blacks and Hispanics for the most recent year with those four years before. As is the trend nationally, the percentage of Black students is increasing while the percentage of Black teachers continues to decrease.

Table 2

Trends in the Number of Blacks and Hispanics as a Percentage of the Total

	Blacks		Hispanics	
	1986	1990	1986	1990
Public School Enrollment	23.6	24.0	9.5	12.4
Classroom Teachers	16.0	14.6	3.8	4.8
	85-86	89-90	85-86	89-90
Admissions to SUS/Educ.	3.9	4.1	NA	NA
SUS Teacher Educ.Graduates	5.8	4.8	4.6	6.7
All Teacher Educ.Graduates	7.6	7.2	5.1	7.6

Haberman (1987, p. 3) depicts the contrast this way:

In urban populations of over 500,000, one in three youth served by urban schools is a person of color, lives in poverty, and has multiple learning handicaps. In contrast, only one in three teacher education graduates is willing to serve or capable of serving students in these urban schools. Teachers with fewer than five years' experience who indicate that they are likely to leave the profession increased from 20 percent in 1987 to 34 percent in 1988, with minority teachers more likely to leave than white teachers.

Thus, there is a growing awareness of the critical need to

find ways to attract and retain more minority teachers in the schools. The PREMIER (Preparation of Minority Educators) Program was designed to address this need through collaborative efforts among an urban school district, a local community college, and an urban college of education.

PREPARATION OF MINORITY EDUCATORS (PREMIER)

Program Goals

PREMIER (Preparation of Minority Educators) has five major goals:

1. Enhance cooperative links among the community college, the university and the public schools to increase the number of minority students entering teacher preparation programs, improve the probability that they will remain in college to graduate, and facilitate the matriculation process to the university from the school district to the community college to the university,

2. Identify and recruit increased numbers of promising minority high school and community college students interested in a career in education and provide mentoring experiences designed to support them through completion of their undergraduate program,

3. Provide PREMIER students with the academic support needed to succeed in the teacher preparation program and to enter the teaching profession through emphasis on those basic skills (math, writing, reading, oral language, critical thinking) needed for success in teaching,

4. Provide PREMIER students with a wide range of early field experiences designed to enhance their knowledge of diverse educational settings and range of career teaching alternatives,

and

5. Provide PREMIER students with a counseling/mentoring support system which improves the retention and program completion rates for project participants.

Program Design

A design team was established to plan, develop, and carry out PREMIER Program activities. This team was composed of three faculty members and two advising staff members from UNF's College of Education and Human Services, three community college (FCCJ) representatives from curriculum and advising, and two district level public school (Duval County Public Schools) representatives. The design team was chaired by the Assistant Dean of the COEHS. Meeting on a monthly basis, helped this inter-institutional team establish open communication lines among the represented institutions, fostered creativity in conceptualizing the recruitment and retention approach the project would take, and maximized opportunities to dovetail program activities with existing institutional programs in three different institutions.

Next, a collaborative professional support network was convened. Composed of representatives from the various financial aid offices, the academic skills centers, the existing minority recruitment and retention programs, and student activity coordinators, this group assisted in coordinating the use of existing institutional resources and identified ways in which these resources could dovetail with program resources to achieve program goals. Communication lines established among members of

this group assisted the program and institutional partners in maximizing resources within each institution and minimizing the duplication of services and effort among the collaborating partners.

PREMIER Program activities centered around two components. Academic support and advising tools which would enhance the retention of PREMIER students as they matriculated through the teacher preparation program were developed. These tools included individualized academic development plans and 2 + 2 program of study contracts for PREMIER students.

Early field experiences were designed to assist students to begin to understand the complexities of K-12 classrooms, identify and confront their own beliefs about teaching, learning and K-12 students, and to begin to develop an understanding of the many roles teachers assume in classrooms each day. As part of this component, a cadre of exemplary K-12 teachers was selected and trained to serve in the roles of field-site directors and mentors for PREMIER students.

The final focus of the project included the development of strategies which would identify early (middle and high school) in students' educational careers, those students who were interested in the teaching profession and mentor those students as they progressed through school, thereby creating an inter-institutional educational "pipeline" beginning in middle school and extending through the university.

SCHOOL-BASED RECRUITMENT

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

(AACTE) in 1987 reported that "Blacks represent 16.2 percent of the children in the public schools, but only 6.9 percent of the teachers" (p. 7). The critical need for minority educators has become apparent in the Duval County Public School System, and as a result, a number of issues concerning the recruitment, certification and employment of minority teachers have been addressed.

In 1989 an examination of the district's minority teacher status revealed: (a) the black/white teacher ratio needed to be increased to achieve federal compliance, (b) previous recruitment strategies to attract certificated minorities to the district had not resulted in the desired increase of minority teachers, and (c) the district was not maximizing opportunities to identify, develop, and nurture potential minority talent from the ranks of its paraprofessional and professional employees and its students.

School administrators took these challenges seriously and initiated multi-level, multi-faceted collaborative programs to facilitate positive change. Three programs to recruit promising future minority educators are currently operating in the district. The programs target minority individuals ranging from fourth grade students through teacher assistants and certified teachers who wish to achieve a more advanced degree. Each program is implemented in collaboration with the area's local colleges or university.

One of the most promising efforts is Project TEACHER (Training, Educators to Achieve Certification for Higher Education Responsibility). This project is funded through district Dwight D. Eisenhower Title II funds and is a

collaborative program involving Duval County Public Schools, Edward Waters College, Duval Teachers United, Jacksonville University, the University of North Florida, and Florida Community College of Jacksonville. The program provides minority persons currently employed in the Duval County system as teacher assistants with an opportunity to earn a Bachelor's degree in mathematics, science, or elementary education. Also invited to participate are minority teachers who wish to acquire a Master's degree with a mathematics or science concentration and minority teachers who wish to earn middle school mathematics or science certification. In addition to providing academic tutoring and career counseling for all participants, the project funds all related graduate and undergraduate coursework. A broadcast quality video tape will be developed to be distributed to selected in and out-of-state minority placement offices. During 1991-92 the Project TEACHER staff will work closely with the PREMIER program to broaden the recruitment efforts for minority educators in the Northeast Florida area.

The district also works collaboratively with Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University to attract minority students into its college of education through the FAMU Incentive Program. Targeted students in grades 10-12 attend a summer symposium and are then tracked and offered incentives to become teacher education candidates.

Minority students in grades 4-12 are also steered toward a career in teaching through the state sponsored program Florida Future Educators Association. Approximately, 75% of the

district's schools participate and in addition to school based activities, the University of North Florida conducts a Fall Roundup and Spring Careers in Education Day, both focusing on opportunities and the steps necessary to enter the education field.

It is anticipated that through these collaborative efforts the pool of minority education candidates entering Duval County's colleges and universities will increase, and that this increase will ultimately result in an increase in the numbers of qualified minority teachers employed within Duval County's Public Schools.

RETENTION ORIENTED ADVISING

PREMIER program activities have focused upon identifying, selecting, recruiting and retaining minority participants who have high potential for teaching, but may need assistance to enable them to qualify for and be successful in the University of North Florida's College of Education and Human Services teacher education programs. To achieve the goals of the PREMIER program, collaboration between FCCJ and UNF personnel is critical. Fortunately, the two institutions have enjoyed a long history of collaborative efforts. Advisor "Visitation Days" each term, annual "2+2 Workshops", and on-line access to student records for advising are examples of the numerous inter-institutional projects in which advisors participate. The PREMIER program seemed a natural evolution for FCCJ and UNF, given the scope and depth of previous collaborative programs.

Programs of Study

The COEHS and FCCJ advising components provide PREMIER students with "2+2 contracts" which form a solid bridge for their

four year academic program. This individualized contract, developed with the student and academic advisors from each college is a key element for the successful matriculation of PREMIER students. The lower division contract includes general education requirements and program pre-requisites in a two year format, which is signed by the student and representatives from both institutions. These contracts are infused with the COEHS upper division (baccalaureate) contracts to ensure a smooth transition from FCCJ to UNF as well as an efficient use of time while the student is enrolled at both institutions. Included in the lower division component are early field experiences and pre-professional education coursework. The upper division component builds upon the academic foundation and field experience of the first two years.

Retention Oriented Advising

Regularly scheduled meetings with PREMIER academic advisors at each institution provide students with counseling and academic planning support that has been identified as being crucial to successful program completion. Literature has supported the vital link between academic advising and minority student retention.

In a study by Burrell and Trombley (1983) minority students perceived advising as the most important support service available to them. Young, Backer and Rogers' (1989) study concerned advising's impact on retention and student development. In a study that included 947 institutions, they discovered that retention rates increased 25% when coupled with a substantial

advising program. These successful advising programs included intrusive advising techniques and the development of a professional, but warm rapport with students.

Giles-Gee (1989), in a two year study examining some of the factors affecting minority student retention, found that black freshmen, participating in a retention-related project that emphasized advising, study skills training, and the use of campus resources, showed significant grade improvement when compared with students who did not participate.

With regard to the use of intrusive advising techniques, Trippi and Cheatam (1989) found that black freshmen for whom advisors initiated the scheduling of subsequent appointments were significantly less likely to persist to the second year than were students who themselves initiated the follow-up appointments or those students for whom no follow-up was ever scheduled. This study reinforces the PREMIER adviser's role in encouraging students to take responsibility for utilizing resources and services.

Metzner (1989) suggests several links between advising and student retention:

1. Advisors offer the potential of linking students' goals and needs with campus resources on a personalized basis.

2. Advisors assist students with the selection of coursework that is compatible with their interests, abilities and outside commitments.

3. Advisors establish a personal bond between a student and personnel of the college.

4. Advisors facilitate referral to other services to create

a better appreciation of the benefits of a college education, greater involvement in the institution, increased learning and stronger motivation for completing a college education.

In developing the PREMIER retention-oriented advising program, the program design team incorporated the salient advising elements compiled as a result of a review of the minority retention literature. These advising techniques assist in providing the support services necessary to enhance the retention and program completion of PREMIER students. The collaboratively developed program of study outlines the graduation requirements for both FCCJ and UNF thereby increasing the students' chances for timely program completion and decreasing the chances for duplication of coursework.

The benefits of the PREMIER program are numerous. By developing a pipeline of qualified minority educators, the program addresses the state's critical shortage of minority teachers. In addition, the probability of student success is enhanced by the ongoing, intrusive advising and mentoring activities at FCCJ and UNF. As an additional benefit, collaboration between the two institutions broadens the opportunities for future collaborative efforts.

Along with the benefits, a number of challenges have evolved from the PREMIER program. Coordinating schedules and meetings is difficult in an inter-institutional project. While project personnel have been extremely cooperative, institutional calendars are not necessarily synchronized. Lack of funds has also strained personnel at both institutions, occasionally

causing a gap in the services provided to students. But, these challenges have been overcome by the commitment of the two institutions to the program's goals.

EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCES

One of PREMIER's five goals set out to provide PREMIER participants with a wide range of early field experiences designed to enhance their knowledge of various educational contexts. To address this goal, an early field experience component was designed. Included in this component are two field experience seminar series--PFE-I and PFE-II, which, along with a series of targeted field experiences in both elementary and secondary urban school sites, allow PREMIER participants to build an experiential base in <u>teaching as a profession</u>. PREMIER students complete both seminar series during the first two years of their planned programs. It is anticipated that successful completion of both seminar series will permit students to substitute them for the required Introduction to Education course.

Successful entry into the profession needs to include more than content knowledge and instructional ability. It must include a working knowledge of what it's like to be a teacher operating within the <u>culture of a school</u> (Ryan & Cooper, 1988). The purpose of the PREMIER early field experience component is to provide specific, targeted field experiences designed to immerse participants in real-world "what-it's-like-to-be-a-teacher" activities. During the bi-weekly seminars, participants then have the opportunity to discuss their experiences with peers, the seminar leader--a COEHS clinical faculty member, their academic

advisor, and college mentor. Seminar topics and targeted field experience activities parallel each other during both PFE-I and PFE-II.

PREMIER Field Experience I and PREMIER Field Experience II

PFE-I and PFE-II are designed to provide PREMIER students with first-hand experiences in what it means to become and be a teacher through targeted clinical experiences. Students are placed with exemplary public school teachers who serve as both models of effective teaching and mentors. Through inquiry-oriented, problem-solving seminars and specific field activities, students develop both a knowledge and an experiential base which provides them with the perspective necessary for preparing for and entering the teaching profession.

Topics of PFE-I. Included in PFE-I are the following topics: (a) considering teaching and deciding to teach, (b) job opportunities and options in education, (c) schooling from past to present, (d) the place called school, and (e) life in schools.

PFE-I objectives. Upon successful completion of PFE-I, students are able to:

1. explore decision-making processes used in considering preparation for and entry into the teaching profession,
2. understand information regarding the availability of teaching positions and other career opportunities within and outside of formal public education,
03. consider the relationship of philosophical perspectives to school practices,
04. identify the forces that affected and continue to effect

the development of American education and schooling,

05. examine the nature of schools and schooling, and

06. describe the school environment and classroom life in terms of the school as a social system, nature of student life, language of the classroom, and relationships among students.

Topics of PFE-II. Topics included in PFE-II are: (a) school curricula, (b) social issues affecting education, (c) teacher expectations, ethical and legal considerations, (d) governance, control and financing of schools, and (e) school improvement in terms of teacher effectiveness and educational quality, teaching as a profession.

PFE-II objective. Upon successful completion of PFE-II, participants are able to:

01. explore how curricular content changes to reflect the changing mission assigned to the schools by society,

02. investigate some of the most sensitive and controversial issues in American education,

03. probe the actual experience of being a teacher and some of the problems that may be encountered,

04. explain the difference between ethics and law and describe some special questions teachers must face as a result of their work,

05. understand the way schools are operated because teachers are personally affected by control, governance and financial decisions,

06. examine what knowledge (content and learning theory), skills, and attitudes are demonstrated by the effective

teacher,

07. explore the role of teacher in the larger context of the teaching profession, and

08. understand not only what schools are like now, but also what they ought to become.

Linking Early Field Experiences to Later Preinternship Experiences

PFE-II precedes EXCEL I (EXcelling in Clinical Education Learning), the first preinternship experience required of juniors in the College of Education and Human Services at UNF. PFE-II provides PREMIER students with experiences designed to serve as a base for later EXCEL I experiences. EXCEL I provides students with access to exemplary role models from K-12 classrooms and a forum in which to discuss their field experiences, increases students' understanding of multi-faceted roles of teachers and their commitment toward those roles, and serves to monitor and document student progress throughout the preinternship experience.

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF MENTOR TEACHERS

The selection and training of PREMIER mentor teachers was based on several assumptions and a working definition of a mentor teacher.

Assumptions

Although the university personnel and K-12 practitioners on the PREMIER design team entered this collaboration with different educational agenda, they shared a strong commitment to the following beliefs:

1. School/university collaborative partnerships provide a

vehicle that can be used to restructure both teacher preparation programs and K-12 schools because their missions, constituencies and reliance on public support cause them to be inextricably intertwined.

2. Teacher training is a responsibility of both universities and K-12 schools thus preparation programs must occur simultaneously in both types of settings.

3. Teacher preparation programs must encompass both (a) the socialization process which transforms students into teachers, and (b) the acquisition of beliefs and skills beginning in the freshman year of college and extending through the first year of teaching and beyond.

4. Change creates significant amounts of discomfort, uncertainty, and hesitancy. To overcome these inevitable responses to change and to gain support, reformers must not neglect certain fundamental needs of teachers and students. Schlechty (1990) identified four of these needs. They are (a) the need for positive recognition and affirmation; (b) the need for variety, both intellectual and professional; (c) the need to feel that what one does makes a difference and that doing things differently will make a difference as well; and (d) the need for affiliation and collegial support and interaction.

5. Investment in human resources is essential to the success of transforming schools and teacher preparation programs. The factory model relied on standardization of needs. This model must be transformed to one which encourages the application of knowledge to solve complex problems in collaborative groups of individuals who know how to seek information from a variety of

sources.

The commitment to these belief statements afforded the design team members with a solid, shared foundation on which to build the mentoring component of the PREMIER process. Realizing that "investment in human resources is essential to the success of transforming schools and teacher preparation programs", the design team formulated a definition of mentor teacher that focused on the human dimension.

Definition of Mentor Teacher

Conflicting definitions of what, exactly, is meant by mentoring abound in both the business management and education fields. Consideration of the literature from both fields led to the PREMIER working definition which includes elements from both. The Woodlands Group (1980) in business management suggests that mentors are "guides who support a person's dream and help put the dream into effect in the world" (p. 920).

From the education field, Anderson (1987), puts forth this description of mentoring:

> a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and protege. (p.40)

Thus, the two definitions encompass the following critical

elements:

1. the process of nurturing,

2. the act of serving as a role model,

3. the five mentoring functions (teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counseling, and befriending)

4. the focus on professional and/or personal development, and

5. the ongoing, caring relationship (Anderson & Shannon, 1988, p.40), which can be viewed as the role of supporter of the student's dreams (Woodland Group, 1980).

These elements combine and interact over time to provide an environment in which growth flourishes--both of the student and the mentor.

Selection Process

Although it was relatively painless to agree upon a working definition of mentor teacher, the design team members discovered that criteria for selecting mentor teachers were diverse, and varied among themselves, as well as in the literature. The minimal criteria the design team members decided upon include: (a) five years of teaching experience, (b) knowledge of clinical supervision practices, and (c) willingness to be trained in topics related to mentoring. These three criteria were then added to the characteristics listed in the working definition of mentor teacher.

Finally, the design team used Berliner's (1986) suggestions for determining expert teachers through reputation and classroom observations and Futrelle's (1990) recommendation of peer selection.

Thus, the selection process for determining the mentor teachers occurred in four stages:

1. One member of the design team met with the principals of the two urban schools who had agreed to become part of the project. The definition of mentor teacher as well as the other identified criteria were thoroughly discussed. The principals then generated a list of possible candidates to become mentor teachers.
2. One member of the design team observed the teaching of one or more of the principals' candidates.
3. A second list of mentor teachers was then generated through a random sampling of the faculties at each school.
4. The lists were then compared, and information from the teacher observations was analyzed by the design team. This resulted in the final list of mentor teachers selected at each school.

Every teacher in each school (fourteen) who was invited to participate in the PREMIER program as a mentor teacher, agreed to do so.

Training Sessions

Daresh and Playko (1990) have learned that additional training is still necessary to implement the role of mentor even when mentors are carefully screened and selected, appear to possess all the requisite characteristics of mentors, and demonstrate a genuine desire to become a mentor. Similarly, the design team felt that training experiences and activities would assist the identified mentor teachers to work more productively

and confidently with the early field experience students.

Subsequently, the design for the mentor teacher training sessions was developed and included both content knowledge and interactive methodology. Basic principles from adult development, clinical supervision, and the effective teaching literature formed the foundation of the content knowledge strand. Mentor teachers also learned about the basic goals of the early field experience component held by the design team, as well as learning about the activities the early field experience participants were asked to complete.

The methods used to deliver the above content included interactive lecture-discussion, cooperative groups, and role-play situations. This methodology also served to strengthen the mentor teachers' interpersonal skills and helped to foster the teachers' disposition toward inquiry and reflection.

The training sessions were carried out in four two-hour sessions spread equally throughout the semester. In order to encourage collegiality and cooperation between the participants and the mentor teachers and among the participants themselves, two students were placed with each mentor teacher at both school sites (Lemlech & Kaplan, 1990).

At the conclusion of the training experience, the mentor teachers completed an evaluation instrument in which they were asked to determine the usefulness and benefits (if any) of the mentor teacher sessions. The results were overwhelmingly positive with 95% of the respondents reporting that the experience was highly rewarding. The three most frequently mentioned benefits of the training were: (a) camaraderie and

interaction with other practitioners, (b) recognition from their peers and university faculty, and (c) contributing to the renewal and restructuring efforts in education.

LEARNING STRATEGIES COMPONENT

One of the major goals of PREMIER is an academic development plan to provide students with academic support needed to succeed at the Florida Community College at Jacksonville (FCCJ) and the University of North Florida (UNF). This component includes two parts: basic skills and learning strategies. The basic skills area includes skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics. Support services in these areas are available at the Learning Resource Center on the FCCJ campus.

The learning strategies area focuses on improvement of the cognitive processes used in critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making. These strategies teach students how to think and act when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task (Deshler & Schumaker, 1986, 1988). Ellis, Lenz, and Saborne (1987) point out the effectiveness of these cognitive strategies in learning. These strategies serve as a mediating link between the application of basic skills to the mastery of content material. Cognitive training is one of the results of the paradigm shifts in the knowledge base of teacher education; that is the movement toward emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making.

The learning strategies approach used in PREMIER was developed at the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities. These learning strategies were modified

and validated for underprepared college students at Johnson County Community College (Denton, Seybert & Franklin, 1988). This research has also been validated at Bakersfield (CA) College.

Learning strategies instruction is delivered through regularly scheduled sessions at FCCJ by UNF PREMIER faculty. It is intended that through inter-institutional collaboration, personnel from FCCJ will be trained to provide this instruction to subsequent groups of PREMIER students. The goal is to institutionalize learning strategies instruction at FCCJ so that all underprepared students can benefit. Content for the sessions is determined by pretest, however, strategies and skills training are offered when students indicate a need for specific assistance. A major strength of learning strategies instruction is that the strategies are applied to coursework in which the students are currently enrolled.

The learning strategies sessions also serve as mentoring sessions. An advisor or PREMIER staff member assists students with their programs of study. Students also counsel each other based on their experiences at the College. Students have found the mentoring sessions to be very helpful.

Another benefit derived from this component is the link between learning strategies developed by PREMIER participants and their ability to teach these skills and strategies to their future pupils. The relevance of these skills and strategies to their future role as teachers is continuously emphasized.

In summary, the academic support component of the PREMIER program enables participants to develop skills and strategies for

success in coursework, provide mentoring opportunities, and train them as future teachers in strategies to benefit their future pupils.

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